

### DWA- Freedom of Speech Essay

Citizens all over the world are in shock as Colin Kaepernick, along with other NFL players begin to kneel during the Star- Spangled Banner. People begin to question this silent protest, and wonder if it is disrespectful. Some believe he could have protested in a different way, while others fully support him. Should such prominent figures be able to protest this way? The ProCon Article and the First Amendment explore the doubts about the protest, and conclude that Colin Kaepernick was simply exercising his rights, and not disrespecting the country. The silent protest performed by the NFL players is not disrespectful because it has received support from prominent figure, it honors the First Amendment, and it has a meaning different than what is believed.

First of all, the silent protests are not disrespectful because those who are said to be disrespected, actually support them. Many people say that the kneeling disregards the American flag, everyone that represents it, including the president. However, the ProCon Article shows the complete opposite, "President Obama said Kaepernick was "exercising his constitutional rights to make a statement..." The president himself believes that the protests are not disrespectful. The president is a main part of our country, and he did not even feel the protest was rude, showing that it was not disrespectful. The president is not only the person that represents the flag, but so do America's soldiers. Despite all of the statements about the kneeling disrespecting the soldiers, Document A shows otherwise, " A letter signed by 35 U.S. veterans stated that "Far from disrespecting our troops, there is no finer form of appreciation for our sacrifice than for Americans to enthusiastically exercise their freedom of speech." The troops fully support the kneeling, and fully believe he is actually honoring them. This leads to the fact that the silent protest was not disrespectful because it honors the troops and what they have done for the United States, as well as represents what the country stands for.

In addition, kneeling for the national anthem is not rude because it actually honors the Constitution. When the founding fathers created the Constitution, they wanted the people to be protected, so they fought for those ideals, and the people shouldn't settle for less. Source B states, "The first ten amendments are called the Bill of Rights, and were designed to show the limits of the government and protect individual rights of the people." The goal was to let the people do what they couldn't when they were under British rule. Instead of disrespecting the country, it actually honors what the founding father worked most of their lives for, and some even died for. Not only did they want the people to have these rights, but they also did not want major restrictions for them. In the First Amendment it clearly states, "It guarantees freedom of expression by prohibiting Congress from restricting the press or the rights of the individuals to speak freely." The act of protesting is not disrespectful, the restriction of it would be. The Bill of Rights fully supports protesting, this silent protest is not disrespectful because it does not go

against any law, and actually obliges by them. Though some say that the kneeling divides the country, there were already divisions before the series of protests. There were racial divisions, and and injustices already present, the NFL players were just bringing attention to that. This protest does not disrespect the country, nor is that the intention.

Lastly, the silent protesting is not disrespectful because it has a meaning different than what is believed. Critics of the NFL protests believe that Colin Kaepernick, along with other football players are against America and the military when it is not like that. The ProCon Article showcases a statement of an NFL player, reading, “ Denver Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall, who also has knelt during the national anthem, said, “ the message is I’m against social injustice...I’m not against the military or police or America at all.” These protests are not disrespectful because the message that the players are trying to get across is not disrespectful because the message that the players are trying to get across it not disrespectful. They are trying to bring attention to the racial divisions, not create problems, or be disrespectful. Brandon Marshall was not the only one to speak on the controversy. Jabrill Peppers, a rookie safety also has, “...We were not trying to disrespect the flag or be a distraction to the team, but as men we thought we had the right to stand up for what we believed in, and we demonstrated” (ProCon Article). These citizens simply wanted to use the platform they learned to speak out against the problems in America. Yet again, the protests are not disrespectful because they are not meant to be. Disrespecting anyone is the complete opposite of what the protesters intended to do, they just wanted to use their voice.

To conclude, considering that figures said to be disrespected actually supported them, it honors the United States Constitution, and it has a deeper meaning than what people believe, these series of protests are not disrespectful at all. The protests were meant to bring awareness to the injustices, but instead they were regarded as disrespectful. The failed attempts at ruining these protests show what the protesters were bringing awareness to. By belittling the protests the disrespect the critics felt was nothing compared to what the protesters felt as they were being neglected in that way.